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- ART. VIII.—1. *The Claims of Labour. An Essay on the Duties of the Employers to the Employed.* The second Edition. To which is added, *An Essay on the Means of Improving the Health and Increasing the Comfort of the Labouring Classes.* London: William Pickering. 1845. 8vo. pp. 288.
2. *The Habitations of the Industrial Classes: their Physical, Social, and Moral Influence.* By HECTOR GAVIN, M. D., F. R. C. S. E. Published by Request, and sold for the Benefit of the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. London. 1851. 8vo. pp. 95.
3. *The Dwellings of the Labouring Classes, their Arrangement and Construction.* . . . An Essay read January 21, 1850, at the Royal Institute of British Architects. With Plans and Elevations. By HENRY ROBERTS, F. S. A., &c. London. 1850. 8vo. pp. 47.
4. *The Labourer's Friend.* July, 1851. No. LXXXVI. New Series. Price 6d. 8vo. pp. 31.
5. *The Philosophy of Ragged Schools.* London: William Pickering. 1851. 8vo. pp. 128.

THE most distinguishing characteristic of the literature of the present age is the attention which it bestows to that portion of society which is generally called "the lower classes." No one, comparing the literature of even fifty years ago with that of to-day, can fail to notice the great difference in this respect. A kindlier, more generous spirit, a deeper, more earnest feeling, have begun to be manifested. The relations between man and man are now more fully recognized, the common ties of human sympathy binding together the highest and the lowest are now more readily acknowledged, the rights of the ignorant and the suffering are now more warmly asserted, and the duties of all classes towards each other are now more strongly urged. From the folio report to the novel, the essay, and the poem, the claims of labor and the laborer are set forth with various power, but with a single object. It is an animating sight to see the leaders of opinion, and the masters of the thought of the world, each in his own way, and with his own best arms, engaged in this struggle

against the evils and unhappiness of earth. It is the visible sign of the influence of the spirit of Christianity, and the progress of Christian principles.

While so many of the foundations upon which men have built their hopes for the advance of the world are crumbling away, the existence of this spirit in literature affords a ground of encouragement which cannot be shaken. But it is, as it were, only the dawning of the day, not the full light of morning. The wisdom and the truth which is contained in these books must be turned by other hands into practical action. The books will have been written in vain, the deepest, most earnest thoughts will be worthless, unless we who read them, and are stirred by their power, contrive to gain from them the inducement and the method of personal exertion. There is no one of us who is without ability to do something for those beneath him in the world; and there is no one who, if he neglects this little something, is able to furnish any better plea than that of selfishness; for the excuse of ignorance will not avail.

The books whose titles stand at the head of this article, are illustrations of the amount and character of the thought which is now given to lessening the inequalities in the condition of men. But it is not as literary productions that they claim our attention. It is on account of the suggestions which they contain in regard to what may be done to raise the condition and character of the poor, that they chiefly deserve our interest. In America, at this time, any such suggestions are of great, almost preëminent importance. The lower classes here, as in the old world, are the *dangerous classes*. The danger from them may differ in amount and in development, but it is the same in character. The very blessings of peace and prosperity which we have enjoyed to an unexampled degree, have served even to increase it. They have led us to look at the established order of things as so fixed and stable as hardly to be separated from the course of nature. But this is no time for such a delusion. Even now, there is fear lest the sea of ignorance which lies around us, swollen by the wave of misery and vice which is pouring from revolutionized Europe upon our shores, should overflow the dikes of liberty and justice, and sweep away the most precious of our institutions.

The relief of the misery of the poor is the object to which our most earnest efforts should be given. As disciples of Christ, as lovers of our country, as men, we cannot refuse them. And in order that they may be effectual, in order to avoid a perpetual round of increasing evils and unavailing remedies, we must begin at the very foundation; we must labor to prevent. The prevention of pauperism is the end to be sought for. And it is a fact which rests not more firmly upon moral grounds than upon those of a true social economy, that to prevent pauperism at any cost is better for a community than the care of it after it exists. As men are not always to be addressed through the highest feelings, as religion and justice are often less powerful over their hearts than habit and selfishness, it is fortunate that it can easily be proved, that, besides the injury that is done to God's work, man, by allowing him to become a pauper, there is also an injury to the community which may be reckoned in money. It could also be shown, by taking the result of a series of years, that, whatever might be the sum expended in preventing pauperism, the amount would be more than returned to the community in the services which it had created.

It is not, indeed, to be disguised, that, as society is at present organized, with unjust inequalities on every side, and yet with no remedy obvious, it is utterly impossible to hope to *extinguish* pauperism. Poverty is one of God's dealings with men, and manifestly one which contains the seed of many blessings; and while poverty exists as God's dispensation, pauperism may follow as the result of men's arrangements. But because, in the present imperfect state of social institutions, we cannot look to preventing it altogether, there is the stronger reason for doing the much that may be done to diminish it. So much, indeed, is to be done, that often we may feel the feebleness of our means, and be ready to take counsel of despair as to the hopelessness of our efforts. But the greatness of the work is to serve not for a discouragement, but for an incitement. As has been well said, "A difficulty is a thing to be overcome." Delay will not increase our strength, and every day's delay but makes the toil more hard. Our little performance is to be measured, not by what might be done, but by what we could do; and though, with all our effort, but one stone be lifted from

the road, that one is cleared from the path of the next comer.

From these general reflections, let us come to the consideration of some of the special provisions which are to be adopted in furtherance of this great end. Recognizing that something must be done, let us see what may be best effected; and feeling the smallness of our means in comparison with the need, let us examine how to apply them to the greatest advantage. We must begin by putting out of our heads all desire for originality, all half-formed expectations of serving our own vanity or worldliness under the cloak of benevolence. We must be prepared to follow in straight and trodden paths. We are to deal with society as it exists, and we must dismiss all fancies, however alluring. We may hope for the regeneration of society; we must secure its improvement.

In the very front rank of the practical measures for the prevention of pauperism stands the improvement of the dwellings of the poor. It is upon this that all other measures for the same end must in great part depend for their success. The subject has excited comparatively little attention in this country, but it would be difficult to place its importance too high. The character of a population depends upon the nature of its habitations. "I have studied," says M. Blanqui, whose authority is not to be questioned, "I have studied with a religious anxiety the domestic life of a large number of the work people, and I am bold to affirm, that the unhealthiness and wretched condition of their dwellings is the primary source of all the misery, of all the vices, of all the calamities of their social existence. There is no reform whatsoever that so highly deserves the attention and devotion of the friends of humanity. It is by that they must begin. Other improvements will flow from that as a natural source — without it, all others will be useless and inefficient. The moral character of a working family is almost without exception to be gauged by the character of their dwelling." *

Virtue and vice are as dependent upon physical conditions as health or disease. There is a fixed relation between comfort and morality, and there is a terrible positive connection

* Quoted by Dr. Gavin, in his "Habitations of the Industrial Classes," p. 72.

between physical and spiritual degradation. When one accustomed to all the comforts and luxuries of easy life enters into one of the low, disgusting haunts of poverty, he feels how little of what is best in him could long withstand the assaults of misery ; he learns for how much he has to thank God, and he acknowledges that his blessings are but the measure of his responsibilities. No imaginary picture can be drawn equal in horror to the realities which the dwellings of the poor present. The details are in all places the same. The accounts of foreign cities, which we have shuddered at when reading them, are reproduced, with little alleviation, in life in our own. In houses built upon close alleys, where the sun never shines, and where the stagnant air is filled with exhalations from accumulated filth ; in cellars dark, wet, rotting, stifling, — are the homes of men, of our fellow-men. Dirt and uncleanness pervade every thing ; there are no accommodations for the decencies of life ; a huddled crowd of men, women, and children herd together like brutes. The very ideas of neatness, of prudence, of sobriety, of chastity, of self-respect, are lost. The passions are early roused, and are subjected to no restraint. Misery seeks a short forgetfulness of itself in the gratification of sensual desires. The affections are stunted ; the natural instincts become the guides of life. And in the hearts of our cities swollen with prosperity, within sound of our boasts of progress and songs of happiness, exists a people more brutal than the savages whom civilization has never approached.*

* In a "Report of the Committee on Internal Health," made to the City Government of Boston in 1849, in speaking of the "wretched, dirty, and unhealthy condition of a great number of the dwelling-houses occupied by the Irish population," it is said, "These houses, for the most part, are not occupied by a single family, or even by two or three families ; but each room, from garret to cellar, is filled with a family consisting of several persons, and sometimes with two or more families. The consequence is an excessive population wholly disproportioned to the space or the accommodations.

" . . . In such a state of things there can be no cleanliness, privacy, or proper ventilation. . . . In Broad street and all the surrounding neighborhood . . . the situation of the Irish in these respects is particularly wretched. During their visits last summer, your committee were witnesses of scenes too painful to be forgotten, and too disgusting to be related here. It is sufficient to say, that this whole district is a perfect hive of human beings, without comforts, and mostly without common necessities. . . .

"The houses above alluded to are also insufficiently provided with the necessary in and out-of-door conveniences which are required in every dwelling-place. The great mass of them, particularly in the region last referred to, have but one sink opening into a contracted and ill-constructed drain, or, as is frequently the case, into a passage-way or street, and but one privy, usually a mass of pollution, for

The means of remedying this state of things do not lie, as some might assert, with the poor themselves. They could not, if they would, help themselves. "The poor," says Dr. Southwood Smith, "can by no prudence or foresight on their part avoid the dreadful evils to which they are exposed." The circumstances that surround them inevitably produce sickness, improvidence, and recklessness. The long exposure to a poisoned atmosphere gradually destroys the spring and elasticity of life. Fever wastes the strength of body and of spirit; and at last, the very impulse and hope of improvement die out.

The remedy for these evils must come from others than the immediate sufferers. It must come from the action of the public authorities, and from the efforts of benevolent societies and of private individuals.

all the inhabitants, sometimes amounting to a hundred. Some of them have neither drain nor privy."

In Half Moon Place, "The houses are built around an area from which air is almost totally excluded by the perpendicular wall of Fort Hill on one side, and the high houses of Broad Street on the other. A large part of the area is occupied by some twelve or fourteen privies constantly overflowing, and by ill-constructed and worn-out sinks and drains, into which are hourly thrown solid substances, which choke them up and cause the liquid parts mixed with them to run over." — *Boston City Document*, No. 66, December, 1849, pp. 12-14.

The City Physician's Report, accompanying that of the Committee, contained details not less horrible. He says, "The plan which is given of a triple cellar would scarcely be believed to represent a reality by those unacquainted with some of these localities." . . . "The third, a dungeon six feet square, and the same in height, with no aperture for the admission of air, save the narrow door, which was closed at night, served to accommodate boarders. The landlord said the tide came through the floor of his rooms but rarely! . . . One cellar was reported by the police to be occupied nightly as a sleeping apartment, by thirty-nine persons. In another, the tide had risen so high that it was necessary to approach the bedside of a patient by means of a plank, which was laid from one stool to another; while the dead body of an infant was actually sailing about the room in its coffin." — pp. 172, 173.

In March, 1850, a census of the inhabited cellars in the City of New York was made by the Chief of Police. 8,141 cellars were found to be occupied by 18,456 persons, who had no other rooms. One twentieth of the population of the city lived under ground. The proportion is probably nearly the same in Boston. From the account of this census published in the *New York Tribune*, June 13th, 1850, we quote the following passages: — "The bed-rooms are still worse places. They are always in the rear, and very few of them have any opening except into the main room. Without air, without light, filled with damp vapor from the mildewed walls, and with vermin, they are the most repulsive holes that ever a human being was forced to sleep in." . . . "There are cellars devoted entirely to lodging, where straw at two cents, and bare floor at one cent a night can be had. . . . Black and white, men, women, and children, are mixed in one dirty mass. Scenes of depravity the most horrible are of constant occurrence."

We might fill our pages with more of these sickening details; but we have quoted enough to show the character and extent of misery which exists among the poor in our cities. For, let it not be forgotten, these accounts are of our own most flourishing, most Christian cities. What a frightful contrast is this misery to our refinements, our delicacies, and our luxuries!

Let us consider, first, the duties of the public authorities. The end of municipal government, as of every other government, is the promotion of the welfare of the people under its charge. The rights of all classes are equal before it, and its duties in relation to every individual are the same. Its interference in any private concerns is to be deprecated, when the interests of the individual and of society coincide; but when those interests differ, the government becomes unjust and partial, unless it interferes to bring them again into mutual harmony. In cases of such interference, however, there is often much private opposition, and much foolish talk about the danger of a government invading the rights of property. But this is a danger little to be feared, in comparison with that which comes from guarding the assumed and fancied rights of property too jealously. And, moreover, whatever be the rights of property, they weigh nothing against the rights of humanity. Nor is the interest of an individual to be set off against the interests of a community. Suppose a man were to erect an establishment, which should bring him in a rich return upon his outlay, but which, from some neglect on his part, should be the source of continual expense and suffering to all the neighbors; — no one would doubt that the government of the place ought to interfere to compel him to remedy the defect, — no government would hesitate to do it. Now this is a parallel case to that of the dwellings of the poor: Houses in all respects unfitted for their abode; the very living in which produces loss of money, of health, and of life to the occupants; and whose polluting vicinity is the cause of disease through the neighborhood, — such houses are let out by individuals as a source of large profits to themselves.

A case of murder by violence is at once investigated, and its perpetrator punished. Murder by slow torture is going on every day in houses in our own cities, and no one reckons or interferes. This is no figure of speech. The tables of mortality prove it as a terrible fact. More than half the deaths which occur in these houses are from preventable causes. Who is to answer for this? *

* It was shown, in the *North American Review*, No. CLII., for July, 1851, that the mortality in the healthy district of Boston was not over 1.50 per cent., while in the unhealthy district it was 5.65 per cent. A most appalling difference.

It is not to be demanded of the government, that they should provide suitable homes for the poor; but it is to be demanded of them, that they should see to it that the houses occupied by the poor should be rendered compatible with health, decency, and morality. No violent or alarming measures are called for; no measures which would shift a burden from one class of the community upon another, are needed to carry this object into effect. A system of inspection and regulation of the dwellings of the poor should be organized under the municipal authorities, which should secure such alterations and improvements in them as should render them no longer abodes unfit for any human creature. Suitable means of ventilation and drainage, a proper supply of water, the arrangements necessary for health and decency, should be provided in every case. And, in addition to this, regulations in regard to the number of occupants in each building should be established and enforced. The proprietors of the estates should, whenever it was possible, be forced to make these arrangements at their own cost, — and in case of their refusal, or of any other difficulty, the estate itself should be held liable for the payment. Nor would it be a small benefit from this just exercise of authority, that the owners of the property thus improved would be taught that their own interests and those of their tenants are, to a certain extent, identical. There can be little doubt that the value of the property would be increased, in a majority of cases, proportionately to the outlay upon it. The selfishness of men is always short-sighted. Extortion always cheats itself.*

We can imagine but two objections which could be made to this plan, and neither of them is such as would be advanced by those who properly feel the importance of the matter, or appreciate the responsibilities which rest upon them in relation to it. They might both, consequently, be disregarded; but the answers to them are short and conclusive.

The first might be, that, to carry out such a system would involve considerable expense. There can be no doubt that

* A plan similar to the above was strongly urged by the Committee on Internal Health, in the Report from which we have quoted. It is a disgrace to the city of Boston, that such a recommendation should have been so long unattended to.

this would be the case ; but it should be remembered that this expense would result in a great saving. Diminish the misery of the homes of the poor, and crime is lessened, sickness is lessened, pauperism is lessened. The jails and the courts, the hospitals and the almshouses, would show the economy of the outlay. It is a grievous thing to have to answer, even in fancy, such objections as this ;—as if money were worth more than justice—as if the riches of a people were to be reckoned by its hoarded heaps of gold. The plea of the expense of doing right will not be listened to at the bar of Heaven.

The other, and more suitable, objection to which we have referred, might be that such a system involved insurmountable difficulties, and that it would be impossible to carry it into execution. This is an argument to which every new plan of improvement is exposed. Fortunately it is without force in this case, for a measure similar to the one now proposed has been adopted in several cities on the continent of Europe, and has been attended with the most beneficial results. An account of a Report on this subject, of the College of Mayor and Sheriffs, to the Communal Council of Brussels, is given in a recent pamphlet by Dr. Gavin.

“By the revival of an old law, an inspection has been instituted of the sanitary condition of dwellings, which has been most minute in its applications, and most serviceable in its results.

“The tabular returns of the improvements effected, show that no part of a dwelling, or of the conveniences necessarily attached to a dwelling, have been disregarded ; but that a wise and prudent humanity has stepped in to regulate the condition of all those structural arrangements which are comprehended in a healthful dwelling.

“It is most satisfactory to find in the report referred to, that, of 2,020 houses, of which 1,355 were in alleys, or *cul-de-sacs*, only sixteen houses, nine rooms, two garrets, a third floor, and a part of a house, have been interdicted as unfit for human habitations ; while only five houses and a part of a house required to be demolished on account of their dilapidation and resulting danger.

“Two only of the proprietors to whom delay was accorded, in order to complete the required works, refused to do any thing ; and only three properties required to be officially made fit for

habitation. Twelve interdictions were raised by the proprietors voluntarily effecting the required works.

"It is calculated from this statement, allowing a population of eleven to each house, that of 22,220 persons who were living in houses which required works of some kind to put them into a habitable condition, 21,957 derived the advantages contemplated by the law, and 263 were displaced from habitations incompatible with healthy existence, or manifestly unfit for human habitation." *

Having thus briefly considered what is to be done by the public authorities, it remains to be shown what may best be effected by benevolent associations. A preliminary and most important consideration in regard to this point is, that nothing should be undertaken by an association simply as a matter of gratuitous charity, or as an affair in which benefits are to be conferred without a corresponding return. The good ends of charity are most surely gained by avoiding all interference with the usual laws which govern men's dealings with each other. They will necessarily follow the exercise of justice and good judgment. But the charity which consists in, and is satisfied with gratuitously conferring apparent favors, is dangerous and deceitful. To establish a society on charitable grounds alone, would be injurious in two ways; it would excite unnecessary opposition on the part of those interested in preserving the existing state of things, and it would tend, (and it is most important to guard against this,) to diminish the self-reliance and self-respect of those receiving its aid.

The special objects which an Association for the improvement of the homes of the poor might hold in view, would be the directing of public attention to the pressing nature of the subject; the guiding of individual exertion to the same end, by the erection of buildings as models; the purchasing and altering, or destroying unfit dwellings; and the obtaining and letting out pieces of ground "to individual builders upon conditions compelling the desired structural arrangements." †

The experience of the "Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes" in London, is a guaranty of the beneficence of such undertakings. This society was

* "The Habitations of the Industrial Classes," pp. 90, 91.

† See "*The Claims of Labour*," p. 234. This excellent book was written by the author of "*Friends in Council*," and "*Companions of my Solitude*." Like all his books, it is distinguished by generous feeling, wise and liberal thought, and grace of style.

founded in 1844, and has directed its chief attention to "the arranging and executing Plans as Models for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Labouring Classes." The establishments now belonging to it in London are seven in number, and consist of houses variously fitted to accommodate men, women, and families. In the Seventh Annual Report of the Committee, presented in July, 1851, it is stated, — "1. That the whole of their buildings have been full for many months past. 2. That the rents continue to be paid with great regularity. 3. That the health of the inmates is excellent."* The Earl of Shaftesbury, (better known as Lord Ashley,) the Chairman, in an address to the Society, at their last annual meeting, said, —

"The return on the whole property is equal to about 4 per cent. on the land; and on the buildings, fittings, and furniture, of about $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Now, observe we have thereby proved what we undertook to prove, that in works of this kind we would carry into effect no eleemosynary principle, no mere matter of charity; we would make it an affair of business, instigated, it is true, and governed by a sound and solemn principle, but one that, between man and man, should be purely a matter of business."† Now, really, I must impress upon this meeting, more and more, as the result of growing experience, the absolute and the indispensable necessity, if you wish to do permanent good to your people, and if you wish to enable them to do permanent good to themselves, to direct your unremitting attention to the condition of their dwellings."

In the words we have quoted, Lord Shaftesbury has stated clearly the principle upon which such works as these should rest. The Society has not attempted to lower the price, but to improve the quality of the dwellings; and, while providing the necessities and some of the comforts of life for its tenants, to receive in return from them a just percentage on its outlay. It has established proper relations between its tenants and itself, and it has shown the feasibility of such works, as affording a fair employment for capital. There exists no reason why the same results should not be obtained in this country. In 1846, the establishment of a Society for the

* *The Labourer's Friend*, July, 1851, p. 106.

† "There is no private interest in the matter. By the charter which has been granted, whatever profits may accrue, must be directed to the extension of the system and the designs of the Society."

improvement of the dwellings of the poor was strongly urged in an excellent Report of a Committee in Boston, on the Expediency of providing better Tenements for the Poor. One of the conclusions arrived at in this Report was, "that property invested in well-constructed and well-situated houses, to be leased to the poorer classes of tenants by the apartment, and by the week, is as safe as any other real estate, excepting the very best, and far more so than the average."*

Another most striking and happy result from the works of the London Society, has been the general health of the occupants of their buildings, in comparison with that of the neighborhood. Mr. Grainger, an officer of the Board of Health, makes the following statement.

"From the evidence I have received, it appears, that, in six out of seven of these establishments, including the Lodging Houses for Single Men, and containing about 957 persons, there has not been a single case of typhus since they were opened; whilst in the Metropolitan Buildings, which have been opened upwards of three years, and have an average population of 550, there has been but one death from low fever; so that, out of a total of 1,507 persons, one case only of typhus has occurred since these institutions were provided specially to test the value of sanitary arrangements. Now,' he adds, 'just look, for the sake of illustration,—if the 1,507 of the working population of the model buildings, several of which are situated in the most crowded and unhealthy parts of London, and where, as in Church Lane, fever prevails, be contrasted with the working population of Liverpool, about sixty cases of low fever ought to have occurred annually; and yet there is but one case from the beginning.'"
The Laborer's Friend, July, 1851, p. 101.

The moral good effects resulting from these houses have been not less remarkable than the physical. It is hardly necessary to detail them here. The evidence is of the strongest character, and the testimony is invariable.

Such are the general results which have followed the workings of this Society; † results full of encouragement, and

* See *Report of the Committee*, p. 33.

† Other associations in England, and particularly the Metropolitan Association for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes, have engaged in the same work, and their efforts have been attended with the same success. In Paris, "*La Société des Cités Ouvrières*," has lately been established for the purpose of building improved Lodging Houses for the Poor. In this country, attempts have been made by benevolent individuals with the same design, but nothing has been done on a large scale.

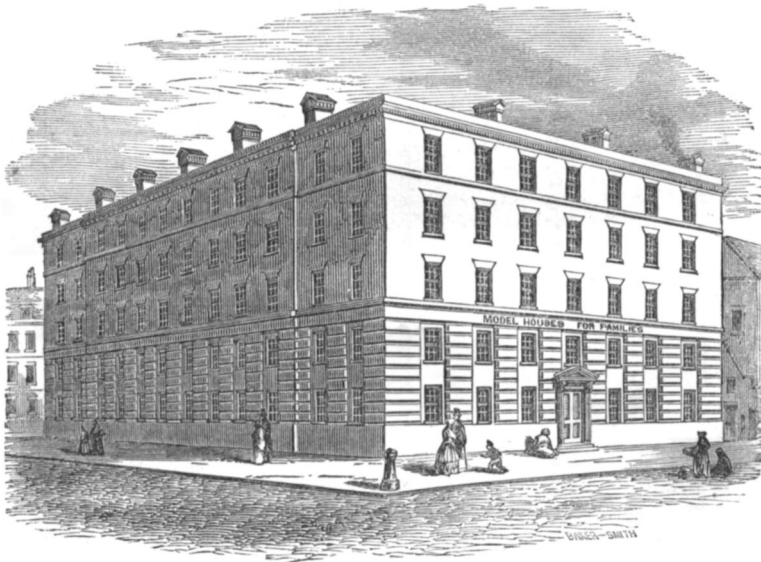
amply sufficient to prove the advantage which would accompany the establishment of similar associations in our own cities. The details of the plan of work must vary in each locality according to its peculiar demands; but the same general principles must regulate every attempt to improve the condition of the poor in this respect, wherever made. Some of the more important principles of construction which have been adopted by the London Society, and which are of universal application, are given by Mr. Henry Roberts, the honorary architect of the Society, as follows.

"In reference to new buildings for the labouring classes, the most rigid economy of arrangement, consistent with accommodation sufficiently spacious to be convenient and healthy, and the utmost attention to cheapness of construction, consistent with durability and comfort, are essential elements of a really good and suitable plan. The architect should bear in mind, that the rents which the working classes usually pay, though exorbitantly high for the wretched accommodation afforded them, will only just yield a fair return for the outlay on buildings constructed for their express use, and fitted up with all the conveniences which it is desirable they should possess. Any expenditure on unnecessary accommodation, which involves an increase of rent beyond that usually paid by the occupants of such a class of dwellings, appears to be at least hazardous, and may jeopardize the whole or a portion of the interest to be fairly expected from the investment." — p. 17.

"The most humble abodes, whether in a town or in the country, in order to be healthy, must be dry and well ventilated; to secure the former, it is essential that due attention be given to the situation or locality, to the foundation and to the drainage, as well as to the materials of which the external walls and roof are constructed. To secure ventilation there must be a free circulation of air; a sufficient number and size of openings, and adequate height of the rooms, which I should fix at not less than seven feet six inches to eight feet; in town buildings I have allowed nine feet from floor to floor. The number and area of the apartments should be in proportion to the probable number of occupants; where intended for families there should, as a general rule, be not fewer than three sleeping apartments, each with a distinct and independent access; no other arrangement can secure a due separation of the sexes. The living room ought not to contain less than 140 feet to 150 feet superficial, and the parents' bed room should at least measure about 100 feet superficial. In the latter, as a provision for sickness, a fireplace is of

much importance. In every room an opening for the escape of vitiated air ought to be made near the ceiling, especially in the smaller bedrooms for children, where there is no fireplace." — pp. 4, 5.

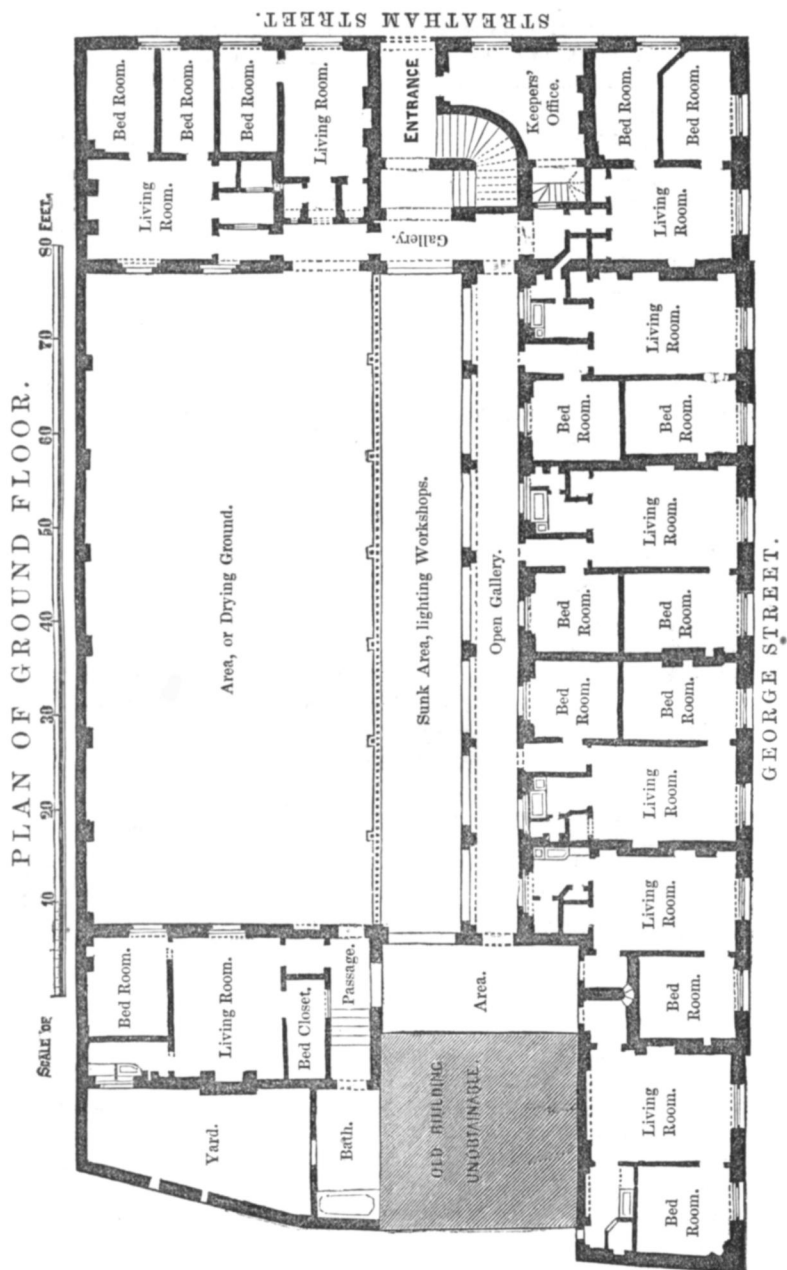
In our cities, model dwellings for families are more needed than any others ; and owing to the peculiar character of our poor population, to the high value of ground, and to the desirableness of putting the homes of laborers near their places of work, it will be found necessary to erect buildings which, while covering a small space, may accommodate a large number of occupants. The following plans and details, copied from one of the late publications of the Society, show what has been done in London to meet these wants, and may afford suggestions applicable to our circumstances.



The Model Houses for Families in Streatham Street, Bloomsbury.

"Of the several examples of improved dwellings for the Laboring Classes undertaken by the Society, the most important is that of a Model Building to accommodate a large number of families, on a plan adapted to situations where the value of ground renders it necessary to occupy but a limited space. . . .

"In undertaking to provide in one pile of building for the



accommodation of a large number of families, amongst the most important considerations has been that of preserving the domestic privacy and independence of each distinct family, and so disconnecting their apartments as effectually to prevent the communication of contagious diseases; this, it will be seen on a reference to the plan, is accomplished by dispensing altogether with separate staircases, and other internal communications between the different stories, and by adopting one common open staircase leading into galleries or corridors, open on one side to a spacious quadrangle, and on the other side having the outer doors of the several tenements, the rooms of which are protected from draught by a small entrance lobby. The galleries are supported next the quadrangle by a series of arcades, each embracing two stories in height, and the slate floors of the intermediate galleries rest on iron beams, which also carry the enclosure railing. . . . One tenement or set of apartments, with their appropriate fittings, comprise all the conveniences requisite for a well-ordered family; and in addition to the sleeping rooms, provision is made for an enclosed bed in the closet out of the living room.*

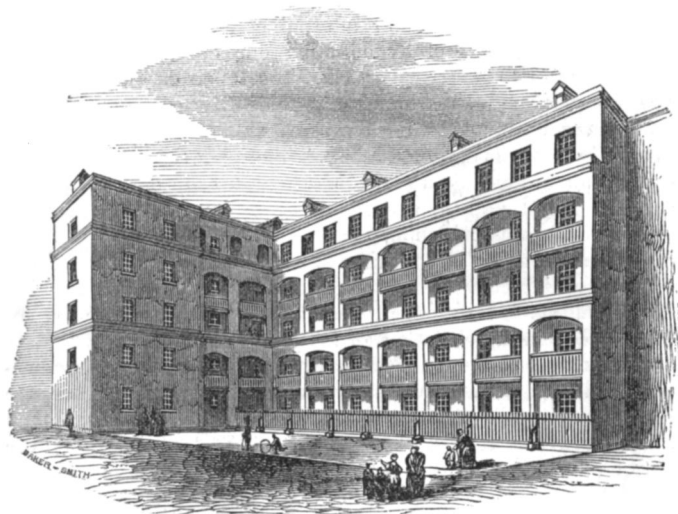
"The nature of the foundation requiring excavation to a considerable depth, a basement story has been formed with a range of well-lighted and ventilated apartments. A wash-house and bath are provided for the common use of the tenants, under the control of the Superintendent or Keeper, for whom an office is placed near the public entrance. To him is also intrusted the retailing of coal at moderate prices.

"The question of rendering the building fire-proof had much consideration, and the plan finally adopted secures this important object, as well as prevents the communication of sound, and all percolation of water between the several floors. This is effected by arching the floors and roofs with hollow bricks slightly wedge-shaped, six inches deep, four inches wide on the top, nine inches long, seven eighths to one inch thick, set in Portland cement, the rise of the arches being from three fourths to one inch per foot on the span. The arrangement of the building is such as to render the floor and roof arches a continued series of abutments to each other, excepting at the extremities, where they are tied in with seven eighths inch iron rods, secured to stone or cast iron springers. With peculiar satisfaction it may be stated, that the extra cost of the *fire-proof* construction beyond that with the ordinary combustible floors and roof, did not amount to one per cent. on the contract of £7370, for the entire pile of building.

"The income derived from this building, at very moderate

* Each set of apartments is fitted with a scullery, a sink, a provision safe, and other similar comforts.

rates of charge, varying from 4s. to 6s., and in three cases 7s. [a week] for a set of rooms, yields a return on the amount of outlay amply sufficient to encourage investments in similar undertakings, — a point quite essential to the success of a model intended for general adoption.” *



View of the Internal Quadrangle to the Model House, Streatham Street.

Having thus shown the possibilities which lie within the reach of a society, of effecting great good by attention to this most urgent necessity, we hardly need add that such possibilities are not to be thrown away. There is no doubt here

* *Circular of the Society*, 1851. The ground rent of the land upon which the Streatham Street House stands is £50 per annum. If we estimate the rent for each set of apartments by the week at 5s., the yearly return from the whole house would be £624. Taking the ground rent from this, £574 are left, or something over 7 3-4 per cent. on the cost of the building.

In our cities it is probable that the value of the ground would be much higher than in London in this instance. The expense of building would also be considerably more. One of our most experienced architects informs us, that after some comparison and calculation, he judges that one quarter to one third should be added to the amount to get a fair estimate of the cost here. He says, "On the introduction of these buildings into our country, some modification both of plan and construction would present themselves, having reference to the different habits of life, or arising from slightly different methods of building and the use of different materials."

It is to be taken into view, in connection with the consideration of the increased cost of such buildings in our country, that the rents paid here would be actually much higher than those in London, though, perhaps, not so high in proportion to the price of labor.

to clog the progress of benevolence. Such possibilities come to us directly from the hand of God ; as we receive them, they turn to blessings or to curses.

We pass now to a topic intimately connected with the improvement of the homes of the poor, the education of their children. In the consideration of the means of preventing pauperism, these two subjects cannot be dissociated.

We have hitherto been accustomed to regard our school system with too blind a satisfaction ; we have not sufficiently recognized its defects ; we have not enough considered that, excellent as it is in many respects, it yet leaves the class most needing instruction wholly uncared for. The reports that are made from year to year of the increase of juvenile vagrancy and depravity among us, are terrible proofs of its incompleteness. A remedy must be found and applied to this growing evil, or the dangerous classes will daily become more dangerous ; and for this we shall have no one to reproach but ourselves, and our neglect will, in accordance with the inevitable laws of God for this world, bring its own retribution.

The same general moral and economical arguments, which have been urged in relation to the improvement of the homes of the poor, apply with equal force to the question of their education. Others of a similar character belong exclusively to it. We spend large sums to secure the benefits of education to our community ; but so long as any class does not receive instruction, so long the community fails to receive the full advantage which it has sought to gain by this expense. While any persons who might have been educated remain ignorant, the state is exposed to the evils which it has desired to prevent. The ignorance of a few may produce evil effects destructive to the happiness and prosperity of many. The good from educating a hundred may be counterbalanced by the evil from neglecting five.

But even were there no danger to the community from leaving an ignorant class in its midst, the chief motive and the true principle of effort for the education of all would remain the same. Every human being is in possession of a boundless, immortal capability of happiness. Many are unable to procure for themselves in this world the means of making that capability a reality ; the means must be supplied

to them by others, or the work which God has appointed, and which Christ has exemplified, is left undone on earth.

The difficulties which lie in the way of properly educating the very poor, are numerous and peculiar. No system which has hitherto been adopted in this country will surmount them. In England, the results which have been arrived at from the establishment by individuals of "Ragged Schools," and in France by the public support of "*Salles d'Asile*," have been of the best nature. These attempts seem to have successfully overcome the chief obstacles before them, and they afford examples well suited to our wants.

In the little treatise on the "Philosophy of Ragged Schools," whose title stands at the head of this article, the system of these institutions is clearly developed.*

Our school system offers the benefit of education to all who may apply for it; but for those who are too poor, too neglected, too ignorant, too wilful, or too idle to seek its advantages, it makes no provision.†

Now it is to be remembered that what we technically call education is, in fact, but a very small part of the education of life. The circumstances by which a child is surrounded are what form his character, that is, are his education. It is in the earliest years that the mind is most easily moulded, and it is then that the bitter experiences of want, sickness, and unkindness are, for the most part, the lot of the young children of the poorest classes. The example of vice is often their daily lesson, and they grow up ignorant of their duties as well as of the necessary consequences of their conduct. They are children, but with little of the innocence, and still less of the happiness, of childhood.

* This essay is one of a series of "Small Books on Great Subjects, edited by a few Well-wishers to Knowledge." In its little compass it contains much wisdom. It is the work of a man of no ordinary liberality and grasp of mind.

† The present efficient City Marshal of Boston, Mr. Francis Tukey, in a report made in 1849, counted the number of truant and vagrant children, between the ages of six and sixteen, in the city, at 1066. He said, (and repeated the same statement in 1851,) "My opinion is, that of the whole number, from eight to nine hundred (from neglect and bad habits) are not fit to enter any of our present schools. From the best information which I can obtain, I am satisfied that the whole number in the city at the present time, (including the above number,) is not less than 1500 of the same class as those described."

"And I earnestly call your attention to them, and the necessity of providing some means to have these children properly brought up, either at public or private expense; for I am satisfied that it will cost the State and City more for police, courts, and prisons, if they are suffered to go at large, than it would to take them now, maintain them, and make them useful citizens." — *Journal of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism*, No. II. p. 36.

In order to counteract the evil effects of this state of things, it is necessary to adopt such means as will insure that these children shall be brought under other influences than those to which they are naturally exposed, and shall receive other education than that which comes from their condition. Schools such as the youngest may attend, must be established on such a system as to secure their attendance. As the ignorant have little regard for long-delayed, ultimate advantages, as their imaginations are often too blunted to recognize any good except that which is immediate, it follows, that, in order to gain the interest of parents, and to insure the attendance of children, some positive immediate advantage should be seen to be connected with the schools. In Paris, this necessity is admirably met by the "*Salles d'asile*." They are established for the sake of protecting early childhood from abandonment and neglect, and from the accidents of all sorts to which it is exposed. They are designed, also, for the cultivation of the growing intelligence, and for the religious and moral instruction of children from two to seven years old. The style of teaching is simple, and fitted, by its variety, to meet the restlessness natural to childhood. A meal is daily given to the children, and perhaps more than one.

"The *salles d'asile* are under the inspection of a committee of ladies, to whom the warmest thanks are due, since, from the moment that the municipal administration took charge of these establishments, they have watched over them with a zeal and care which have never for a moment relaxed. . . . Their functions are not confined to the watching over the intellectual and moral state of the pupils; they hear from the chiefs of the establishment, all the wants, not only of the children, in regard to clothing, but also of those of the parents who may be in extreme poverty. Not unfrequently, these ladies themselves carry their benevolent assistance to the homes of the wretched. . . . These '*salles d'asile*' are among the most useful and popular institutions of our time. . . . 'If public benevolence,' adds M. Frégier, from whose account the foregoing is abridged, 'can ever be applied with success to the moral amendment of the people, it will certainly be by active concurrence in the establishment and multiplication of these asylums.' " *

* *The Philosophy of Ragged Schools*, pp. 35-38. Abridged from Frégier, *des Classes Dangereuses*, tom. ii. p. 6.

The facts which are given in the foregoing passages leave no room for doubt, that establishments similar in their character to the "*salles d'asile*" should be added to our present system of schools. Even if the experiment were uncertain, there could be no hesitation about trying it. The matter is of such a sort that there is no safety in neglecting a single suggestion that seems to make for good.

Nor are we without an instance of the benefit which may be done here in our cities by an institution of this kind, even when it depends on a single individual for efficiency and success. It is now not two years ago that a "Charity School" was opened in one of the poorest quarters of Boston, with the design of affording shelter, instruction, the necessary clothing, and occasional food to the children of destitute parents, who would otherwise have been left to run wild in the streets, and pick up a degrading and miserable livelihood by beggary or by theft. The comforts which they receive are sufficient to induce the children to attend regularly. As often as any become fitted to enter the public primary schools, or as often as suitable places in private families can be found for their reception, they are removed from the "Charity School," and the vacancy is filled by other children of the same class. A number of ladies have assumed the responsibilities of visitors of the school, and have aided it with their counsel and their sympathy. Nearly three hundred children have received the benefit of this excellent institution. It is impossible to estimate the exact amount of good which it has effected;—each person will measure it by a different standard; its results may have been more or less successful;—but of this there can be no question, that such a work is in the true spirit of benevolence, and is worthy of all encouragement. It ought not to be left to the uncertain chances of individual capacity and private charity; but the municipal administration, coming to its aid, should secure it upon such a foundation as would render it permanent as long as the need for it should remain, and extensive enough for all whose welfare it might serve.*

* This "Charity School" is now established at No. 2 Channing Street.

In order to secure the full advantages of such an institution, and to confirm the good which is gained by the children, it will, in all cases, be found necessary to endeavor to raise the character of the parents. According as this is

The establishment of Evening Schools in our cities and towns has, in part, occupied the ground of the "Ragged Schools" in England. In the city of New York, they are now supported at the public expense; and we trust that her example will soon be generally followed.

Though not confined in their operation to any one class, their chief attention should be bestowed on the poorest and most depraved. So far as this is done, so far will they be likely to be followed by the same good effects as have resulted from the Ragged Schools. The work, however, is difficult. It requires peculiar traits of character in those who engage in it, and the teaching is by no means a simple process of cultivating the intellect. The affections are to be developed by sympathy and kindness; confidence is to be won by consistency; the moral truths taught by words are to be illustrated in conduct, and the progress of the intellect is to be based on the cultivation of the heart. We would willingly quote at length from the Philosophy of Ragged Schools, in proof of the efficiency of this method; but we must be content with the following description of the mechanism which is employed.

"Reader, have you ever entered a Ragged School? If you have not, suppose yourself at my elbow, and make a visit to B—— street. You pass through rather a dirty street, and then enter a very dirty alley, near the lower end of which you see a door, and, on entering, find yourself in a clean and comfortable apartment, where from sixty to seventy boys and girls of the most squalid appearance are assembled in small groups round several well-dressed persons. They are reading or spelling, or perhaps tracing letters or words on their slates. You see among them a sharp, eager look, which tells of wits sharpened by necessity; you speak to one; you receive none of the usual homage paid by poverty to riches, but you receive the appellation of 'teacher,' which is, in their minds, the noblest they can give; and in a moment, without the least disguise or *mauvaise honte*, the child will tell you his history, and talk as freely as to an old friend. . . . Presently the reading ceases, a gentleman mounts

done, the results of the school will be more or less satisfactory. We are often apt so to limit our benevolence, as to reap from it but a stunted growth of good fruits. — Connected with the School in Channing Street, is an office where such work as can be obtained, is gladly received, and given out to poor parents whom forced idleness or ignorant incapacity might otherwise lead to intemperance and increased misery.

a kind of rostrum, a little elevated above the children, and addresses them. He explains the moral doctrines of Christianity, exhorts them to follow the example of our One Great Master, who was himself poor and suffering; encourages them to hope in his goodness, and to see in the present zealous endeavors to ameliorate their condition, a proof that His mercy indeed watches over them. Many of the children listen with the most fixed attention; you see that, at any rate, they understand what has been said; sometimes, a general 'Thank you,' marks their satisfaction when the lecture is concluded; and often shrewd remarks show that they have fully apprehended its purport. A prayer and a hymn sung by the teachers, and such of the children as are capable, concludes the meeting; and whilst the singing is still going on, the teachers gather and dismiss small lots of nine or ten at a time, so as to ensure their quiet departure.

"Such is the mechanism of a Ragged School; but without the warm benevolence which animates the teachers, and which shows itself in all their actions, little would be done."* — *Philosophy of Ragged Schools*, pp. 63–65.

After this extract, more need hardly be said. Shall we urge again the duty that rests upon every city and town, upon every individual, that there should be no sparing of effort to see that those who may gain good from such schools are not left without the means of gaining it? Selfishness dictates exertion for this end. Charity, benevolence, all right feelings join in urging it; and if we would show that our professed belief is not a mere profession, we must give our strength to this Christian work.

Some time ago, a thief asked to be allowed to go over one of the Ragged Schools in London, and then said, "I shall subscribe a sovereign, annually; for if these schools had been in existence some years ago, I should not have been what I am now." It depends on us to determine the destiny of the poor, forlorn, tempted child in our streets. How shall we determine it?

We have now very briefly gone through with our subject, — the prevention of pauperism by the improvement of the homes and the education of the poor. We have left many

* "A man, then a notorious thief, said to one of the missionaries who attended him in prison, 'I always considered religion all humbug, and the parsons humbugs, who were paid for praying and preaching; but when I see people taking young thieves who are following in my steps, out of the streets to save them from ruin, this is something like Christianity.'"

collateral suggestions untouched, and we have left undeveloped many arguments and instances by which the views here stated might have been confirmed. But we have brought forward enough to prove that something should be done to better the existing state of things, and we have shown means by which some progress may be made toward this end. And here we might close. But before we leave off, we would speak of one thing more, the most important of all, inasmuch as it is the foundation upon which all that can be accomplished must rest, — we mean individual exertion. It is a matter of deep personal interest to us all, and yet it is a matter about which there has been, and is now, much coldness of feeling and much want of thought. Individual benevolent exertion is only another name for charity; and charity has been too much regarded as a virtue well to be admired, and excellent to be practised, but not of imperative obligation. We lay up good stores for ourselves first, and then we give out of our overflowing abundance, and mean to be charitable. We are too apt to measure our duties by the standard of worldly approbation, and it is easy to neglect that which our narrow world cares little for. Still we profess to be followers of Christ, and believers in an all just God. We go through decently with the observances which show to the world our respectable faith. But how is it with our hearts and our lives? Are they not often unchristian and unbelieving? Do we not forget God, and do we not live as if God would forget us? Lazarus sits at the gate of Dives to-day as he did of old; and to-day, as of old, Lazarus is neglected.

No one will deny that the elevating of those who are poor and miserable in body and soul, is a work worthy of the greatest and most constant efforts. It is a work to be accomplished only by such efforts. Now, no great work ever has been, or ever can be, done on earth except by the combined exertions of individuals. If we look at the amount that is to be done, before the poor can be made what they ought to be, it might seem as if any single person could do very little; but the weakness of one is not like the strength of a thousand. Let every man do his best, and the work, though ten times as great, would be soon completed. Nor is any one held excused because of his want of power. Have we nothing for others? No gifts which we can spare? No superfluity bounti-

fully given to us that it may serve the need of those less rich? Have we no single talent, no thought, no word, no action, no sympathy?

But while we recognize this need and this power of individual exertion, we cannot be blind to the difficulties which surround it. "If there is any thing," says the wise author of *The Claims of Labor*, "If there is any thing that requires thought and experience, it is the exercise of charity in such a complicated system as modern life." The difficulties are not merely with regard to the objects of charity, and to the method of securing the ends of benevolence, but they relate also to the means which we use, and involve the consideration of all social arrangements. There is no harder point in the morals of life than to draw the line between proper and improper expense, between suitable and unsuitable indulgence. But our danger is not that we shall forget ourselves too much. The need of thought and experience does not diminish our responsibility, nor is it to serve as an excuse for careless inaction.

The exercise of charity should not depend on fitful and uncertain impulses; it must rest on high and abiding principles. Enthusiasm may light its fire, but the constancy of a right will must support its steady flame. We are to look for no new principles in morality or in politics, by which any sudden and happy change is to be produced in the condition of men. "The Christian religion," says the author we just now quoted, "has been eighteen hundred years before the world, and have we exhausted the morality in that?" We must make use of the means we have. We must not attempt the work in any spirit of dilettanteism or affectation. There is often an attractiveness about the representations given of charity, which may induce those whose fancies are touched by such pictures to endeavor to imitate them, and add this to their other worldly graces. They may be sure that such imitation is worthless. Too often, the earnestness of the real lover of this heavenly mistress is chilled by disappointment. Humility, patience, and constant hope must be with him to refresh his zeal.

And now, why is it that, with this work set before us, a work which might well engage the affections of the noblest heart, and the powers of the strongest mind, and yet one

which rejects no willing laborer, however humble, — why is it that so little is done? It is from want of thought and want of imagination. In our pleasant homes, it is hard to imagine the sufferings of the poor. In the whirl of our busy occupations, it is hard to catch a moment in which to think of what we might do for them.

“The wounds I might have healed!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part.
But evil is wrought by want of Thought,
As well as by want of Heart.”

Does the shadow of the sick woman, of the shivering child, never darken the brightness of our luxurious, lighted rooms? At our tables, is a place never filled by the image of the half-starved, hopeless man? In the pauses of the music, do we never hear the sound of the children crying for help?

“Oh! songez vous parfois que de faim dévoré
Peut-être un indigent dans les carrefours sombres
S'arrête et voit danser vos lumineuses ombres
Aux vitres du salon doré?”

We who can spend so much for pleasant trifles for ourselves, we who can build large houses, and buy gaudy furniture, and laces and jewels and all costly finery, can we not spare one of these vanities for the wants of others?

“Lady! Lady!
Wear but one robe the less, — forego one meal, —
And thou shalt taste the core of many tales,
Which now flit past thee like a minstrel's songs,
The sweeter for their sadness.”

The evil that comes from thoughtless carelessness is perhaps as much, and is as certainly to be laid to our charge, as the evil that comes from design.

Recollecting then this, and living according to this recollection, we may also recollect with hope the words, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.”